

SIEC Listening Session August 3, 2006 Waukesha

Attendees & Agency:

Maureen Weiher	Milwaukee Co IMSD
Randy Tylke	Milwaukee Co Sheriff's Office
Vince Flores	Milwaukee Police Dept
John F Veryhen	WI State Patrol
Richard H. Tuma	Waukesha Co
Chris Patterson	Waukesha co
Cathy Selterski	Sussex Fire Dept
Dan Schmerse	Milwaukee PD Communications
Joe Amodeo	City of Brookfield PD
Mike Milbrath	Milwaukee Co EMS
Ken R Moran	City of Fond du Lac MIS
Kevin Lemke	Fond du Lac City PD
Pete Lieven	West Bend PD
Varla Bishop	WI State Patrol
Connie Catterall	WI State Patrol
Keith Kessler	Douglas Co EM/911
Jan Victorson	Bayfield Co EM
Michael Martens	Franklin Police Dept
Brad Liggett	City of Beloit Fire Dept
David Sleeter	Rock Co Communications Center
Bill Harper	Rock Co Sheriff's Dept
Ameha P Williams	Milwaukee Police Dept
Sam Steffan	Milwaukee Police Dept
Kathy Biggan	Winnebago Co Sheriff
Bill Tedlie	Winnebago Co Sheriff's Office
Michael E Brooks	Winnebago Co Sheriff's Office
Craig Lauten Schlager	Winnebago Co Sheriff's Office

SIEC/OJA Staff:

Johnny Smith, Mindy Allen, Larry Nelson, Gale Sorum, Ben Schliesman, David Spenner, Tom Ritchie, Lara Kenny

The listening session started at 1pm with opening remarks to welcome everyone by Johnny Smith. He and the panel of SIEC members emphasized they are holding the sessions to get feedback on the technical plan and would like to stay away from funding issues for the time being. A sign up sheet was passed around.

Gale Sorum gave an overview of the technical plan and the history of the SIEC that has led to this point and resulted in the technical plan. He highlighted that the technical aspect of interoperability is one of five things that needs to be discussed according the SAFECOM chart on page 3 of the plan. Gale also re-iterated that the plan has short and long term goals and that as short term goals are met the long term goals can be continually evaluated. He ended his opening comments noting that this is a work in progress and the plan has not yet been approved by the SIEC.

Question/Comment: Richard Tuma- He likes the short term and long term approach and is happy that the plan provides some guidance, especially useful when doing grants. Congratulations to SIEC for putting it together. It is very logical and has a common sense approach. The question he posed is about a hybrid approach- how are you going to put the systems together so they can talk to each other? Is there a conceptual idea?

Answer: Gale- His technical prediction is use microwave with back up of fiber optics. His overall answer is that this is part of the long term answer. The plan is based on P25 and trunking system, instead of one flat line. A series of P25 specifications will lead to interoperability overtime.

Question: Dave Sleeter- Is portable coverage viable and is portable coverage where we are headed?

Answer: Gale- Portable coverage became the goal after talking to Emergency Management and first responders. If this goal is to high/costly, which it may be, then we can scale back, but it is better than not trying for best. We will do as much as possible to reach goal of portable coverage.

Dave follow up- He supports this goal but knows it is a huge goal for statewide. He said it is an important function of the system to do this.

Question: Dave Sleeter- What is the local plan for building system and maintenance of system. Is there a plan to assist locals?

Answer: Gale- There is no specific plan but there is a large interconnected system and locals will need to maintain their piece in their jurisdiction.

Answer: Johnny- The Outreach Sub-committee is already speaking with elected officials because the SIEC wants to be the advocate for locals to help foster communication between locals and among levels of government. The goal is to educate officials to get them to understand needs in terms of funding.

Answer: Tom Ritchie- It will be easier to request funds from the federal government and the state when there is a final approved plan that the SEIC can share with them.

Dave Sleeter follow up- He is worried that this high tech system will require lots of work and his suggestion is that the cost of maintenance be built into funding. The system is complex and ever evolving and he would like to see maintenance built into the grant package.

Answer: Mindy Allen- It will take a commitment from all levels of government, including the funding for maintenance.

Answer: Gale- He emphasized that there are many little tasks, in the short term goals, that are already working towards interoperability. Re-programming radios and MARC channels foster cooperation that can lead to ideas and discussions about funding later. No one person has an answer to questions about the system, but we can move forward with little steps. Also, we can continue to watch other states for Best Practices that can help provide some guidance for Wisconsin.

Question/Comment: Keith Kessler- He had 2 questions/comments to make.

1) He supports Dave Sleeter's comments about funding because they have a hard enough time struggling to keep their repeater system up with the amount of tax money they get.

2) He wants to know if Wisconsin is working with other states about mutual aid frequency in boarder areas because they need this capability.

Answer: Gale- Carl Guse is working on this problem.

Answer: Johnny- It is also being discussed at the National Emergency Management Conference and he believes some position papers will be published about this. If there are published papers, the SIEC will put them on the website.

Someone else mentioned that there are currently some efforts underway to work with Michigan in this area.

Question: Richard Tuma- Who will manage the long term goal of implementation and maintenance? Does the SIEC have any thoughts on this?

Answer: Gale- The Department mentioned in the plan does not exist but is a hypothetical that would be necessary in the future to manage the system. The question posed is legitimate and the SIEC has discussed possibilities but this is something that needs to be worked out.

Answer: Johnny- The state is designing/implementing a system of systems so this leaves room for participation and responsibility for everyone. All parties have a part in adhering to the state standard and the state is not solely responsible for the system.

Dave Sleeter- This could be a problem because all counties would have to pay different vendors to maintain their portion. He feels the main interface part of the system needs to be maintained by a central group or department at the state level.

Question/Comment- There was a return to the portable issue again and this person was worried losing end-user support for the system if we pull away from the ultimate goal of statewide portable coverage. He thinks it's a foremost goal that we can't lose.

He spoke about his experience in Arkansas when they state tried to do portable coverage but the portable radios didn't work everywhere because of lack of towers and the end-users, first responders, stopped supporting the system the state had built.

Answer by Johnny- Education is also necessary when using new equipments or going to a new system, so that will be key to gaining end-user support.

Question/Comment: Sam Stefan- He had three question and comments.

1) What level of local participation do you expect? If locals need to help fund this system then it isn't viable if locals decide not to join. No one will be using it.

2) The 7 year goals mesh with Phase I of P25. The radios won't work in 7 years so he suggests taking a closer look at Phase II of P25 to avoid this problem.

Answer by Gale- There is a need for interim radios right now because radios don't last as long anymore and we can't keep waiting for the next radio to be put out. Also, this is why the SIEC did a short and long term list of tasks. We can still move on the short term tasks while we watch the progress of technology to make good plans for the long term. Need to build a backbone.

Sam follow up- P25 has been a failure of public safety. Keep the overlays as part of the long term goals, not just in the short term. It is a good idea.

Johnny invited Sam to submit some suggestion in writing since he is knowledgeable about the technology involved and Sam said already had sent a paper to Gale and SIEC.

3) Patching will need to be an important part because otherwise will overload the 800 MHz in the eastern part of the state. Pay more attention to the patching in the plan to avoid problems in this regard. Look into ISS. He felt the SIEC glossed over patching in the technical plan.

Answer: Gale- 15-20% of plan for interoperability is technical and 80-85% is about issues with people. There are many other issues to be addressed to achieve interoperability.

Answer: Mindy- The operational plan will address some of the issues that Sam brought up.

Question- Is public service, as opposed to just public safety, included in this plan?

Answer: Johnny- Yes, it is not just first responders.

Maureen Weiher- Many public service agencies are important part of homeland security and communications. Health and Human Services, Transportation, are all part of an emergency response.

Comment: Mike Milbrath- He likes the hierarchical approach. He also thinks we need to concentrate on data exchange too, not just voice. EMS has had success in dealing with DOT to get data exchange lines. The plan needs to focus on this too.

Response: Gale- He aggress 100% and said the system doesn't care of its using data or voice but the technology has to be there. If we keep focused on building a system of systems, we will get there along the way as the technology develops.

Comment: Gale Sorum- Areas of the state are planning mesh networks but the state plan doesn't take into account things like Wi-Fi because it changes by location. The plan lays out what the SIEC wants to be minimum interoperability. Local agencies could build out systems like mesh networks and Wi-Fi systems and they could/would be used to support local needs but the statewide system views then as complementing the base system.

Question: Dave Sleeter - This is a follow up to Douglas County's question about funding. What is the funding impact on locals?

Answer: Johnny- As stated earlier, we cannot answer questions about future funding.

Answer: Tom Ritchie- It's a local responsibility as it should be to fund their own areas. Locals cannot rely on federal and state dollars. OJA has handed down lots of grants already but it cannot be expected to always be there.

Answer: Larry Nelson- Need to get the plan ready to be able to lobby federal politicians for more funding.

Question- What have other listening sessions thought about the coding Milwaukee discussed with Carl a few months ago?

Answer: Gale- Other sessions have not as been as technical in their questions/comments.

Comment: Keith Kessler- We would like assistance in marketing. Local elected officials do not understand the need for funding for things like interoperability. The state needs to

document something saying this money is necessary so locals can get support when they need money.

Answer: Johnny- The Outreach committee is working on this. Please send the SIEC your ideas for message and delivery that should come from the SIEC regarding this marketing. Keith follow up- It needs to be top-down sell, not bottom- sell because then its the people asking for the money that are trying to sell the idea.

Jan Victorson- Need to repeat the message over and over and deliver it in different ways.

Joe Amodeo- The situation is analogous to cell phone 911 capability; people don't understand the limits of capability. Correcting misconceptions would be better perceived from an outside player than from the bottom.

Question: Sam Stefan- Is the plan to have state build the backbone and the locals buy the radios? Is there a minimum percentage of participation that is necessary for the system?

Answer: Gale- The question asked is a worst case scenario. We are already one year into a three year plan and things are already moving forward.

Answer: Mindy- Once you get some pilots up and running, if they are successful other will naturally want to join and be a part of the system.

Question: From someone from Beloit- When will these be mandated?

Answer: Johnny- Wisconsin is a home rule state so the SIEC want to entice people to join the system because it's a good system.

Beloit follow up- Suggests mandating it because it will move locals toward it and they will buy in then.

Comment: John Verhyen- The state run mobile data system has 175 agencies using it with the state. He doesn't think the locals are leery of working with the state.

Question- When will the feds award the planning grant the state applied for?

Gale explained the FY06 Federal Homeland Security grant process and that the money was awarded to OJA and they are in the budget process with the planning committee.

Question: Johnny- Would people like it if the SIEC had regular listening sessions, instead of ones only when there was a big topic to be discussed?

There was a mix of answers that included:

- Yes

- If there is no new information it would be a waste of time, but if there are big things, they would be good.

- Set the date for every three months, for example, and then cancel if don't need to have it.

Question: Johnny- How else should we get the word out about listening sessions?

Response: The one suggestion was to request email and phone number on the sign in lists and then put it in the OJA/SIEC system.

This concluded the listening session.